



Bison herd provides cultural, educational value to tribe



Bison take turns grazing against the backdrop of the mountains southeast of Ignacio. Smaller groups of bison are separated from the herd for inspection and vaccination by Southern Ute Wildlife staff. The Bison provide meat for the tribal membership and are a cultural and educational resource. Bison manager Chris Olguin works the stock gate during seasonal vaccinations. The crisp morning air is accentuated by the steam exhaled by a young bison, which is about to receive a routine treatment before being returned to pasture.

Protecting a legacy • from page 1

“This is not a free ranging herd of bison, not a wild species, but semi-wild,” said Division Head Steve Whiteman. “We manage the bison for a variety of benefits

for the membership.” The herd is part of a larger initiative across tribal lands called the Inter-Tribal Buffalo Council, the mission of which is to

reestablish buffalo herds throughout Indian Country. A board of directors, which includes representatives from each participating tribe, governs the council.

Olguin has served on this board as vice president in years past, fostering strong ties with other tribally managed bison programs. The council aims to promote cultural enhancement, spiritual revitalization, ecological restoration and economic development by re-establishing bison populations.

“One of the spiritual beliefs about buffalo is that they are survivors,” Whiteman said. “They have been able to endure, and I think that Indian people can relate to that.”



photos Jeremy Wade Shockley/SU DRUM

